TOWARD GREATER EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRESIDENT AND FACULTY
MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

1800

THE REPORT OF
THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CURRICULUM

SEPTEMBER 1985

Possession in Great Measure

Supreme Success

The time is favorable--a time of
strength within, clarity and culture without.

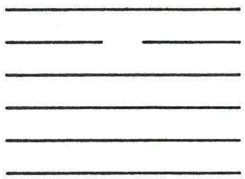

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 History of Curricular Change at Middlebury 4

Chapter 2 Values in the Community of Learning 12

Chapter 3 Calendar 19

Chapter 4 A New Curriculum for Middlebury College 30

Appendix Building a Community of Learning 49

Preface

The formation of the Special Committee on the Curriculum was announced to the College community by President Robison in a memorandum to the faculty dated March 4, 1985. In the memorandum, the President charged the Committee "to address the perceived need for some kind of intellectual core to Middlebury's course of study."

Over the summer the Committee has sought the faculty's opinion on the current state of the curriculum and its counsel as to how the curriculum might be improved. The Committee met with nineteen members of the faculty and staff during the week following Commencement, received written communications from another fifteen faculty, and members of the Committee discussed the curriculum informally with dozens of faculty. These colleagues will recognize many of their observations and suggestions in the document that follows. In addition, the Committee examined a variety of current reports on the state of higher education in America. From all this, we gained what we believe to be a clearer understanding of the current state of the College, both its special strengths and those areas that can be further improved. Our shared perception derives not from any unique wisdom or insight but rather from the fact that we have had time to consider the various components of the curriculum and to discuss these components with members of the faculty and staff who know most about them. We also have had time to contemplate the curriculum individually and to discuss it as a committee over many days and weeks, something that committees during the academic year rarely have the luxury to do.

The present document represents the results of the Committee's deliberations. It includes an analysis of the academic state of the College, recommendations for change, and formal proposals that will be offered for faculty vote.

The Committee over the course of the summer has come to be convinced of the great potential of Middlebury College as a liberal arts institution. As the College embarks on a capital campaign to improve its financial state, it also finds itself at an auspicious moment when it can realistically aspire to become the finest educational institution of its kind in the nation. The recommendations in this report are offered toward that end.

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Chapter 1

History of Curricular Change at Middlebury

"Integrity in the College Curriculum," a 1985 report from the Association of American Colleges, addresses "the decay in the college course of study and . . . the role of college faculties in creating and nurturing that decay." In his widely publicized essay of the previous year, "To Reclaim a Legacy," William J. Bennett, then Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities and now Secretary of Education, accuses many colleges and universities of "allowing the thickness of their catalogues to substitute for vision and a philosophy of education." Such critiques are representative of a nationwide concern about higher education which is also reflected in the proposals of this Middlebury College report. As the authors of the AAC document state, "we feared that our eventual report would be a voice crying in the wilderness. We know now that we have joined a chorus."

Middlebury takes part, then, in the chorus of concern that includes the Association of American Colleges and William J. Bennett, as well as colleagues at many other colleges and universities. On a more specific level, we agree with the

Association that certain categories of learning deserve emphasis, and have attempted to serve such educational values in the revised Foundations program within this proposal. Similarly, we affirm, with Secretary Bennett, that at least a few texts fundamental to our tradition must be introduced to all our students; the proposed core course for sophomores expresses such a conviction. But these recommendations do not arise primarily from the ideas of those outside our College. Rather, they emerge from a debate carried on at Middlebury over a number of years, about how we can better address the needs of current and future students while remembering the lessons of earlier generations who studied and taught in this place.

Middlebury, like many of the earliest American colleges, was founded to uphold a particular religious vision: for the first several decades of its existence, the College was New England's stronghold of conservative Calvinism and a bulwark against that Unitarian menace from the North, the University of Vermont. As religious, scientific, and political currents have shifted during the past two centuries, our curriculum has gradually altered to accommodate new forms of knowledge and to serve more varied constituencies. But such expansion also has been part of a dialectic, or a pulse, in the life of our institution. Specific changes in the curriculum have often been accompanied by the attempt to redefine and thus reaffirm those principles of educational community to which Middlebury is dedicated. Our committee believes that this is a time in the life of the College for such consolidation and declaration.

One way to read the history of Middlebury's curriculum is as a gradual departure, in the period between 1800 to 1973, from uniform requirements for graduation, followed by a series of efforts, over the past dozen years, to reemphasize coherence and shared values in the curriculum. At the College's beginning, all students followed the same, totally prescribed program. In _The Laws of Middlebury College,_ published in 1803, we find that:

> The first year of their standing at College, the students shall be instructed in the learned languages and arithmetic; and the study of the languages shall be continued in part, the two following years. In the second year, they shall be instructed in English grammar, geography, the elements of chronology and history, in algebra, geometry, the mensuration of superficies and solids, and conic sections. In the third year, in trigonometry, navigation, surveying, natural philosophy, and astronomy. In the fourth year, in rhetoric, ethics, logic, metaphysics, civil policy, and the law of nature and nations. With these studies shall be intermixed frequent essays in elocution, English composition, and forensic disputation.

Students at Middlebury were also called upon for frequent public "declamations." Absence from a lecture, recitation, or, most serious of all, chapel service, was punished by a fine.

The notable fact about the Middlebury Catalogue for 1900-1901 is how much closer the prevailing system of requirements was to that of 1803 than to present requirements for graduation. Students' courses of study during their four years were still almost entirely prescribed, with those in the Classical program completing stipulated numbers of hours in Greek, Latin, English, German, Philosophy, Logic, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Natural History. Those in the Latin-Scientific program left out the Greek and doubled their hours in German and Natural History. Students could, in addition to their requirements, elect work in the fields of French, Pedagogy, and Astronomy.

A dramatic loss of any educational core occurred at Middlebury during the twentieth century, as it did in almost all other institutions of higher learning in America. The competition of entirely new disciplines with those already offered made it hard to maintain a manageable list of "essential" subject-matters; in particular, the philological studies related to religion and Classics lost their hegemony. Simultaneously, the explosion of new information in all fields led professors and students alike to commit themselves more fully to a particular discipline.

When turning to the Middlebury College Bulletin of 1950-51 one discovers that electives had come to comprise most of the students' courses, though there was still a sizable body of requirements. Every freshman in the fall of 1950 took required courses in English and Contemporary Civilization during each semester. The remaining three courses in a given term were electives, drawn from the introductory courses in Biology, Chemistry, History, Home Economics, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Drama, and "any of the ancient or modern languages." Students in 1950 also had to fulfill six distribution requirements before graduation--two each from Group A, the languages and literatures, Art, and Music; from Group B, including Economics, History, Political Science, and Sociology; and from Group C, the laboratory courses in Biology, Chemistry, Geology, and Physics. Finally, instead of majors, there were "Fields of Planned Study":

> A Field of Planned Study is a group of courses so planned as to form an integrated and coherent whole, attention being paid to the advantageous sequence of courses within a department and to the coordination of courses in different departments. As a rule each Field of Planned Study centers around some one department which sponsors the plan, the courses in the department being designated the major, those in other departments being called cognate courses.

By comparison with all previous curricula at Middlebury College, the program in 1970 is remarkably easy to describe. Every student was required to take a one semester course in writing and to complete a major. Such a situation resulted from the same logic of expansiveness and specialization that had generated every previous change in our requirements. One positive dimension of these changes at Middlebury College was the vast increase in faculty and student participation in scholarly research. Nonetheless, many faculty, as well as other members of the College community, felt keenly the loss of an educational center after the wave of curricular liberalization in the late 1960's. A given department's offerings seemed to have no necessary relation to other courses being offered in the College. Graduating seniors interviewed by the Educational Council in 1973 generally found their own transcripts a jumble; they could often not recall why they had elected many of their courses in the first place. In 1975, the Faculty voted for the current system of requirements, with Foundations Courses intended to provide some broader context for students' work in their majors and Concentrations designed to ensure a secondary area of competence.

We view the work of this committee as a continuation and clarification of the curricular revision begun in 1975, just as that year's new curriculum drew impetus from the Report of the Special Committee on the College in 1973. There has, in fact, been a continuous process of reevaluation at Middlebury over the past dozen years. The challenge we have confronted during this period is that of retaining the significant advantages of strong majors while returning to a firmer expression of educational community. But we also should acknowledge that, through the efforts of several committees over this period, a consensus is in fact emerging. Just as this committee's proposals develop in some ways from the 1975 curriculum, so too do they follow certain lines suggested in the 1982-83 "Ten Year Planning Document" of the Faculty Committee on Long Range Planning. We did not set out to fulfill that earlier group's predictions, but our discussions have nonetheless led us to concur that a system of trimesters should be substituted for the current calendar, that the freshman course of study needs special attention, and that greater integration of academic and residential life is imperative.

During the past twelve years of curricular planning, Middlebury has also achieved impressive growth in a variety of areas. The College's current, broadly based strength offers one more inducement to undertake a thorough revision of the curriculum: our ambition does not need to be restricted in the very specific ways assumed in the Special Committee's 1973 Report. A number of Middlebury's present advantages were reiterated by colleagues with whom we spoke this summer. The faculty's professional self-confidence and scholarly accomplishments and the College's endowment have alike burgeoned in the past twelve years. Offerings in the foreign languages have become even stronger, with the establishment of a Department of Chinese, Italian being expanded, and Japanese about to be introduced. Our summer and overseas Language Schools, the Breadloaf School of English in Vermont and at Oxford, and the

Breadloaf Writers' Conference have all become more accessible to Middlebury undergraduates. Exciting new programs, such as those in International Politics and Economics, Literary Studies, Film, Russian/Soviet Area Studies, and the Alumni College, have been initiated. And we continue to be very successful in recruiting excellent students and faculty. We will not find a more opportune moment to stake out an adventurous and distinctive place for our institution in the landscape of American education.

Finally, the Campaign for Middlebury College is an especially appropriate time for questioning and redefining our mission as an educational institution. As we ask for support for the College from graduates and friends, we must more clearly articulate Middlebury's special value. We need to show that, through a thoughtful dialogue with our own past and with those around the country who are concerned about the quality of higher education, we have responded both to the voice of specialized knowledge and to that of shared educational experience and principles. We must, while maintaining our ability to offer instruction at the frontiers of the various academic disciplines, remember our history and mission as a community of values.

Chapter 2

Values in the Community of Learning

Samuel Johnson asserted that "We have art in order better to enjoy our lives or better endure them," and a similar claim, we feel, needs to be made for the liberal arts education at Middlebury College. Historically, we have shared the objectives of helping our students to develop analytic skills with which to reason and of guiding their learning so that they become responsible intellectually for the subject matter of different academic fields. We have not, as a faculty, so consistently articulated the human and moral goals of a liberal arts education at Middlebury. Our lack of consensus over the central purpose of the liberal arts education has influenced the shape (or lack thereof) of our curriculum by permitting an imbalance between the twin goods of unrestricted choice and common educational experience. As a committee, we have asked ourselves what assumptions we should make about the liberal arts education we are offering our students and what principles should be supported by the structure of the curriculum. Our desire to reassert such principles has led this committee to make recommendations in the area of student residential life and to design a sophomore core course relating tradition to contemporary challenges to the human prospect.

The defining characteristic of Middlebury College today is the strength and relative autonomy of departments, an autonomy born of necessity to fill the vacuum created by the elimination of curricular structures nearly two decades ago. A negative result of strong departmental programs has been the fragmentation of our curriculum and, for this reason, several colleagues whom we interviewed during the summer urged the abolition of our existing departments and departmental majors altogether, suggesting that they be replaced with more broadly based programs of study. Other faculty argued that there are certain things that all of our students must learn. For example, upon graduation all students should be acquainted with masterpieces of Western literature, all students should be familiar with the pivotal events in world history, and all students should be able to describe the epochal developments in the history of science. One colleague asserted that all graduates should be able to whistle three Mozart arias.

The Committee's recommendation builds on our departmental strengths and achievements by adding a program of freshmen seminars, a core course, and new Foundations courses which will, from one perspective, be prior to departmental offerings and coursework in the major. These courses will be based on works that express or dramatize fundamental human concerns and values, on the exploration of how culture and language condition our sense of identity, on the discoveries that have provided fundamental knowledge of the natural world, and on the rich sense of aesthetic experience in many fields. Such offerings are intended both to educate students in the diversity of human culture and to introduce them to the fundamental skills that they will cultivate within their majors: the capacities for close reading, for inductive and deductive reasoning, for formulating and structuring an argument, and for manipulating materials and metaphors.

Every Middlebury graduate should confront the encompassing issue of responsibility by studying literary works that dramatize the consequences of moral choices and by confronting historical documents in which moral tenets are embodied in codes of law and behavior. Only by considering models and examples, both imagined and actual, can one think deeply in moral terms. Human beings become the stories that they tell themselves; in large measure we are creatures who narrate ourselves into what we are. A humane education must teach the language of the moral imagination--the myths and the historical accounts, the facts and fictions that enable the student to assume with deep awareness and responsibility a variety of private and public lifetime roles, such as parent and citizen. The most pragmatic aspect of an education is the nurturing of ideals and values because we cannot live without them.

In studying various critiques and evaluations of American higher education, the Committee was particularly impressed by the perspective of Frank H. T. Rhodes, president of Cornell University. Rhodes argued that a college graduate should:

- Be able to read and listen with comprehension and to write and speak with clarity, precision, and grace.
- Have a sense of the context--physical, biological, social, historical--within which we live our lives.
- Have some insight into a time and culture other than our own.
- Be able to reflect in an orderly way on the human condition and our beliefs, values, and experience.
- Be able to appreciate nonverbal symbols, including the creative and performing arts.
- Be able to work with precision, rigor, and understanding in a chosen discipline, so as to understand not only something of its content but also its premises, relationships, limitations, and significance.

Rhodes concedes that this is not a task to be completed in four years but rather to be achieved over a lifetime. These current proposals at Middlebury, too, need to be seen as establishing a basis for our students' lifelong learning, not as assuring mastery of all skills and texts after just four years.

The quality of the experience of learning itself is, for this reason, as important as the particulars a student learns while here. Much that the undergraduate reads and learns will have to be learned again, freshened, broadened, and deepened. But if the experience of learning releases the passion to learn, to understand, and thus to sympathize, then the model of one's life of study has been secured.

We have characterized strong autonomous departments as contributing to the curricular fragmentation that our report seeks to address. But we must also acknowledge the constructive roles our departments now play and will continue to play, as we seek to improve further the curricular and intellectual experiences offered our students. In the last two decades our faculty has achieved noteworthy successes through its active participation in the evolution of new knowledge and understanding. More importantly, the professional energies of the faculty have nurtured and have been nurtured by our evolving curriculum. As a result, students gain a more accurate sense that much learning is open-ended, and that the process of inquiry is at least as important to them as is any established body of concepts and facts. Our committee continues to support the many advantages of an undergraduate education centered upon strong departmental structures even as it identifies some curricular weaknesses inherent in our current degree requirements.

In order that we most effectively establish a basis of lifelong learning for our students, it is essential that our curriculum encourage linkages between disciplines and programs, rather than isolating one discipline from another. As Rhodes notes, "Our most gifted scholars should be encouraged to roam widely, to speak not only within but beyond their disciplines, exploring their disciplines' foundations, examining their relationships, and pursuing their implications." The Committee has sought to design ways to enable faculty with interdisciplinary interests to pursue them within the structure of the curriculum.

Johnson's contention that study has two goals--better to enjoy our lives and better to endure them--suggests that learning is a passionate activity and implies that learning, and the tradition of learning, is fundamentally an activity to be shared. The impetus for our Committee has been to find ways in which our curriculum, the practical embodiment of articulated educational beliefs, could strengthen our sense that we are indeed a community of learning. Finally, we must preserve and advance, yet continually question and redefine the tradition of liberal education.

We will not be able to aid our students in the integration of knowledge merely by changing the structure of our degree requirements. Any curriculum or set of requirements is lifeless without the teachers who are its heart. Let us be the teachers that Nietzsche described:

> Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is, something in itself ineducable and in any case difficult of access, bound and paralyzed: your educators can only be your liberators.

We must continue to serve the tradition of liberal and liberating education for what it reveals about the universe and the human condition and for its capacity to preserve and enhance what is humane.

Chapter 3

Calendar

The Committee devoted a great deal of time and thought to the consideration of the current calendar and many alternatives to it. The survey on the Winter Term conducted by the Educational Council in the spring of 1985 demonstrated what was already common knowledge: that there are strong opinions both in favor of and opposed to the Winter Term among the faculty, but that there is no clear consensus. Those same opinions for and against were communicated to the Committee over the summer and were expressed within the Committee as well. At the outset, a majority of the members of the Committee favored keeping the Winter Term as part of the calendar. The most persuasive argument for the retention of Winter Term was the opportunity it provides for innovative, experimental, or interdisciplinary courses without sacrificing courses in the major program. Such arguments did not sway those opposed to Winter Term from their view that, despite its great potential, it has become a noble experiment that no longer serves the educational needs of a majority of our students. Arguments against maintaining the Winter Term included the problem of faculty fatigue and the perceived lack of academic rigor in many Winter Term courses. Extensive discussion of several possible remedies failed to convince the opponents of Winter Term that it could be made to work even if the faculty renewed its efforts.

All members of the Committee were troubled by testimony from members of the Dean of the College's staff concerning the dramatic increase in alcohol abuse and vandalism that occurs during the Winter Term and the adverse effects of the Winter Term on some students who are unable to make appropriate use of the large amounts of free time provided in the month of January and who, as a consequence, suffer a deterioration of study habits that often are not recovered until late into the spring semester.

The Committee next considered a semester calendar (4-4), but identified several difficulties. First, there was a strong reluctance to recommend a decrease in the number of weeks of instruction during the academic year that would occur with twelve or thirteen week semesters. The most obvious option remaining was the fourteen week semester, which would require examinations after Christmas (a prospect that elicited little enthusiasm) or beginning the academic year in August. Furthermore, most faculty would have to teach three courses in at least one, if not both, of the two semesters. Our deepest qualm concerning a semester system was, however, the decrease in the number of courses elected by a student that such a system would entail. Under a semester system, students would take eight rather than nine courses per year with the result that faculty and students would be bound even more tightly to departmental programs and would have less opportunity for experimentation.

The Committee thus sought a calendar that would promote curricular innovation and flexibility without the shortcomings of the Winter Term. Following much deliberation, we recommend a trimester calendar--an option that none of the Committee had favored at the outset of our discussions. The trimester calendar offers a number of attractive features, most importantly by serving as a viable framework for our proposed curricular reforms.

In designing the calendar, the Committee worked with the following assumptions:

- Because of the schedules of the Language Schools and the Breadloaf Writers' Conference, classes should not begin earlier than at present.
- Because of the schedules of the Language Schools and the need for our students to seek summer employment, classes should not end later than at present.
- At least two weeks should separate the end of one trimester from the beginning of the next to provide faculty sufficient time for grading of final examinations and for course preparation for the subsequent term.

- Students should take as many courses as they do at present, nine.

The trimester calendar with nine week terms in which students take three courses per term would proceed as follows for the 1987-88 academic year, the year in which we propose that this calendar be implemented.

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Tuesday, September 1	Freshman Week begins
Monday, September 7	Fall trimester begins
Friday, November 6	Classes end
Wednesday, November 11- Friday, November 13	Examination period
Saturday, November 14- Sunday, November 29	Interterm recess (16 days)

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Monday, November 30	Winter trimester begins (three weeks of classes)
Friday, December 18	Christmas recess begins (16 days)
Monday, January 4	Winter trimester resumes (six weeks of classes)
Friday, February 12	Classes end
Wednesday, February 17- Friday, February 19	Examination period
Saturday, February 20- Sunday, March 6	Interterm recess (16 days)

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Monday, March 7	Spring trimester begins
Saturday, April 9- Tuesday, April 12	Spring midterm break (4 days)
Tuesday, May 10	Classes End
Friday, May 13- Monday, May 16	Examination period
Sunday, May 22	Commencement

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Under this calendar, freshmen would arrive on the first Tuesday in September and classes would begin on September 7. There would be nine weeks of classes, ending on November 6. This would be followed by a four day reading period and a three day exam period. It is expected that three days will be sufficient, since students will be taking three courses per trimester, rather than the four of the current calendar. A sixteen day interterm break, which would include Thanksgiving, would begin on November 14. The problems presented by the Thanksgiving break under the current calendar would thereby be eliminated. Students would not leave early for the recess because exams would fall immediately prior to the beginning of the vacation period. The one or two "dead weeks" that occur after the Thanksgiving break and prior to the end of fall classes under the current calendar would also be eliminated. The long interterm recess would also facilitate attendance by faculty at the many professional meetings that occur at that time of year.

The winter trimester (the words "winter term" having been struck from our vocabularies) would begin November 30 and continue for three weeks before a sixteen day Christmas recess. The trimester would resume on January 4 for six continuous weeks of classes. This period could be used for special projects, theatre productions, or experimentation, the preparations for which were made during the first three weeks of the trimester. Outside faculty could be brought in to work with Middlebury faculty during the three weeks before Christmas or the six weeks after. Classes would end on February 2, followed by a four day reading period and three days of examinations. An interterm recess of sixteen days would be begin on February 20.

The spring trimester would begin March 7, with a four day break between the fifth and sixth weeks of classes. Classes would end on May 10 and Commencement would be held on May 22.

The elimination of the Winter Term releases some seventy courses into the curriculum, allowing for the additional programs that we propose. A second educational benefit of the trimester system is that students, while continuing to take nine courses in a year, will need to concentrate their efforts on only three rather than four courses at any time. Finally, this new calendar offers increased flexibility in the design of courses, since a given class could extend for one, two, or three trimesters depending on the requirements of its subject matter.

The trimester calendar does not interfere with the programs of students who choose to study abroad for a full academic year. Certain adjustments will have to be made for those juniors who attend one of our Schools Abroad or other overseas programs for less than a full academic year. Under the current system, students who study abroad for a semester and the winter term earn five credits. Five credits would also be earned by students under the trimester calendar. The sixth credit needed to equal two trimesters of study on campus might be earned in one of five ways: (1) with Advanced Placement credit, (2) with summer credit from the Middlebury Language Schools, (3) by electing a fourth course during a trimester at Middlebury, (4) by increasing the program of study during the time abroad, (5) by independent study. Under the trimester calendar, February freshmen would become December freshmen, beginning classes in the second trimester.

The material covered in a nine week course will be roughly equivalent to that presently treated in a twelve week course, although the rhythms and strategies of the shorter courses will be obviously different in some ways. In order to make the hours spent in class equivalent to the current total, we propose increasing the meeting times of classes to 65 minute periods of instruction for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday classes and 100 minute periods for Tuesday and Thursday classes. A revised daily schedule is provided below.

Daily Schedule of Classes

Monday-Wednesday-Friday Classes

The typical class under this schedule would meet for three 65 minute sessions per week totaling 1755 minutes of classroom instruction time. In a nine week trimester this would amount to 29 hours and 15 minutes of class time versus the current MWF classes, which meet three times per week for 50 minutes, totaling 30 hours of class time in a twelve week semester. A possible schedule would be:

First Period	8:15 - 9:20 AM
Second Period	9:30 - 10:35 AM
Third Period	10:45 - 11:50 AM
Lunch	12:00 - 1:20 PM
Fourth Period	1:30 - 2:35 PM
Fifth Period	2:45 - 3:50 PM

Tuesday-Thursday Classes

The typical class on the Tuesday-Thursday schedule would meet for an hour and 40 minutes (100 minutes) twice a week. In a nine week trimester this would amount to 30 hours of classroom instruction. Under our current system, Tuesday-Thursday classes meet for a total of 32 hours in a twelve week semester.

First Period	8:00 - 9:40 AM
Second Period	9:50 - 11:30 AM
Tuesday Convocation (described in chapter 4)	11:40 - 12:30 PM
Lunch	12:15 - 1:45 PM
Third Period	2:00 - 3:40 PM

It is assumed that the student who, under the current calendar, takes three MWF courses and one TTH course in both of the two semesters and a winter term course with six hours of instruction per week has 268 hours of class per year. If we adopt the above schedule, the student taking two MWF classes and one TTH class in each of three nine week trimesters will have 265 and one half hours of classroom instruction. However, if that student attends two-thirds of all scheduled convocations (14 out of 21 convocations each of fifty minutes duration), about eleven hours of intellectual exposure will be added. With those eleven hours added to the student's total classroom time, the new trimester system proposed above will amount to an average of 277 hours per year or an increase of nine hours per year.

Our chief concern is the maintenance of the same number of contact hours that occurs under the 4-1-4 calendar. The schedules provided above offer one example of how this might be achieved, but there are other possibilities that need to be explored, including offering shorter classes that meet more often each week.

Teaching Load

A further advantage of the trimester calendar is that most faculty members will no longer be expected to organize and teach three courses during a single term. Just as we anticipate that students will be able to focus their energies more effectively when taking three courses per term rather than four, the Committee likewise is convinced that most faculty members will be able to teach better courses when responsible for mounting only one or two courses in a given term rather than three. Increased opportunity for faculty research during the academic year afforded by this redistribution of teaching loads should also prove advantageous in the recruitment of new faculty.

The trimester system also offers advantages for leaves. For example, faculty taking what is now a fall-winter or winter-spring leave, would, under the trimester calendar, receive an additional month for concentrated research. Finally, a trimester calendar will cause each member of the faculty to rethink the content and structure of each of his or her classes, and this will inevitably have a refreshing effect on education at Middlebury College.

Chapter 4

A New Curriculum for Middlebury College

Introduction

Previous chapters of this report have delineated the context within which our committee is proposing revision of Middlebury's curriculum. We have both reviewed today's national debate about higher education and affirmed the independent and continuous discussions at our own college over the past twelve years; we have related current tensions between specialization and general education to a broader historical perspective; we have articulated our sense that moral issues and humane values continue to have an essential role in liberal education. The new calendar described in chapter 3 reflects our belief that significant curricular reform will be enhanced by a situation in which every course and major will have to be reconsidered. In developing these convictions at some length and in reiterating them here, our committee is not so brash as to wish for the last word. We do hope, though, that faculty debate in the coming year will return continually to the fundamental questions of educational philosophy. Only within such a framework do the details of any curriculum, whatever they may be, become significant.

The new curriculum being proposed in this section of the Committee's report is based on the following assumptions, which are shared by all members of the Committee:

- The need to ensure that every freshman will take at least two seminars of limited enrollment conducive to active participation in class discussion and frequent evaluation of work.
- The need to increase the attention paid to writing in the undergraduate program, both across departmental lines and over the course of the four undergraduate years.
- The need to provide a common educational experience, in terms of exposure to a series of great ideas and texts, to all Middlebury students.
- The need to provide students with a sense of identification with their peers in their class that comes from common academic as well as residential experiences.
- The need to ensure a combination of continuity and renewal in the courses offered to meet core requirements.
- The need to preserve strong departmental majors, which the Committee recognizes have been and will continue to be one

> of the strengths of Middlebury College, while at the same time ensuring that sufficient faculty resources are devoted to the general education component of the curriculum.

The Committee believes that these assumptions are reflected in the curricular proposals set forth in this section of the report. The proposals involve the following topics:

- Freshman Seminars
- A Sophomore Core Course
- A New Foundations Requirement
- Concentrations
- Majors
- Senior Work
- A Tuesday Convocation

Freshman Seminars

Each member of the freshman class will be required to take two freshman seminars. The topic of each seminar will be determined by the faculty member teaching it, subject to the approval of the Curriculum Committee. Although the Committee expects that the freshman seminars will be thematic and intellectually exciting, there is no expectation that the subject matter of freshman seminars will be limited to a "core curriculum." Indeed, we expect these seminars to provide an opportunity for the kind of innovative courses that took place during the Winter Term.

The freshman seminar requirement will replace the current freshman writing requirement. All freshman seminars will involve intensive expository writing. The requirement of two seminars for freshmen will thus increase significantly the amount of time students spend writing and rewriting, in settings of frequent interaction between student and faculty member, during their first year at Middlebury. In order to help teachers provide for prompt and frequent evaluation of written assignments, the size of each freshman seminar will be limited to 15 students. The College will offer workshops and other forms of support for faculty who desire guidance in the teaching of writing in freshman seminars.

All entering freshmen will take a seminar in their first trimester on campus in order to ensure that freshmen have at least one course in which there is closer interaction with the instructor than is usually possible in a large lecture course. Approximately 35 seminars will have to be offered to guarantee each freshman a place in the fall trimester. Prior to arriving on campus, incoming freshmen will be asked to express preferences for these seminars. The assignment of freshmen to seminars will reflect their preferences as much as possible. All of the students in a given seminar would ideally live in the same dormitory. The instructor of each fall freshman seminar (or Winter Trimester seminar for December freshmen) will serve as the academic advisor for the students in that seminar throughout the freshman year. Freshman seminars in the fall term will be assigned and scheduled in such a way as to avoid conflict with the students' other courses, either by use of the computer or by scheduling all freshman seminars at an hour in which other courses for freshmen may not be scheduled.

Freshmen will be required to take one additional seminar in either the Winter or the Spring Trimesters of their first year at Middlebury. Approximately 15 to 20 freshman seminars will be offered in both the Winter and the Spring Trimesters.

The titles of the seminars will be listed in a separate section of the general catalog and course catalog. The content of the course may be closely connected with the disciplinary interests of the instructor or it may represent endeavors in a new or interdisciplinary area. At the discretion of departments, freshman seminars may be counted toward departmental major requirements, but departments may not require students to take freshman seminars for the major or require them as a prerequisite for entry into upper-level courses in a department.

A Core Course for Sophomores

Every member of the sophomore class will take a required core course in the Winter Trimester. By taking this course in the sophomore year, an entire class will acquire a common intellectual core, examined from the perspective of a team of four faculty. This common core can serve as a basis of subsequent work throughout the college experience. The title of this course will be "Tradition and the Human Prospect." The central focus of the course will be on seminal ideas and texts of the Western tradition and the utility of those ideas and texts in understanding the human condition. While there will be no established canon of works to be covered in this course, the following list is suggestive of the range of materials which might be covered over several years: the Bible, Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, Descartes, Goethe, the *The Federalist Papers*, Marx, Darwin, and Freud.

This course will be a truly interdisciplinary one, in which students will be encouraged to explore the connections among physical reality, moral and ethical philosophy, literary and artistic imagination, and historical, political, and social thought. Because of its nature, the course will be team-taught by a group of faculty drawn from the various divisions of the College. The core course will be listed and described in a separate section of the general catalog and course catalog.

During the Winter Trimester of every academic year, a team of four faculty members will devote all of their teaching time to the sophomore core course. Each of these four faculty members will teach only one course during the preceding Fall Trimester, so that they will have time available to plan the core course.

The title of the core course, "Tradition and the Human Prospect," will remain the same from year to year. However, the specific syllabus of the course, and the faculty members who teach it, will vary from year to year. Under one possible model, two of the four members of the first year's team would teach the course in the second year. The other two members would be new in the second year. From then on, each year's team would consist of two holdovers and two new members. This form of rotation would ensure a combination of continuity and renewal in the content of the course.

To provide adequate departmental and divisional representation on the teaching teams for the core course, the following restrictions should apply: no more than one member of a team may be from the same department, no more than two members of a team may be from the same division, and all divisions must have at least one team member over a two-year period.

We recognize that this course will be larger than any course presently offered at Middlebury College. However, with four faculty members devoting all of their energies to the core course, we believe that the course can be both rigorous and stimulating. The structure of the course need not be limited to the established pattern of two lectures and one discussion section per week. We expect that the four faculty members will use the fall trimester to develop innovative and exciting strategies for presenting the course material. Among the formats that may be used are debates, symposia, films, and presentations by distinguished visiting lecturers and performers as part of the Convocation program in the Winter trimester.

The Foundations Requirement

Although we have chosen the term "Foundations Course" from the current curriculum we have redefined the meaning and implementation of this requirement. In proposing a new Foundations Course system, the Committee is not suggesting the deletion of all courses currently having Foundations Course status. Some of these courses may, in fact, be reworked and proposed for inclusion under the new Foundations requirement; those not designated as new Foundations courses may be retained because of their intrinsic value and importance for departmental majors.

In the course of its deliberations, the Committee concluded that the needs for general education called for in all the national studies as well as by many members of the Middlebury College faculty could not be adequately addressed through a core course or core courses, primarily for logistical reasons involving staffing. The Committee decided, therefore, to propose four broad areas of study for all students and to limit the number of courses in each area to four, so as to prevent the uncontrolled proliferation of courses that has weakened the current Foundations requirement. The four areas were chosen with two concerns in mind: (a) that they introduce students to fields of inquiry broader than departmental courses, areas of study that the Committee deemed essential to a liberal education and, (b) that they not merely validate the elective courses of most students.

Our committee decided after lengthy debate not to recommend the institution of a foreign language requirement at Middlebury. We are convinced, however, of the value of such study and have designed the second of our four foundation requirements to provide exposure to the special perspectives gained through the study of foreign languages and cultures.

We propose that all students be required to complete one Foundations Course in each of the following areas:

1. Metaphor and the Arts. The languages of music, art, creative writing, theatre, dance, and film.

2. Language and Cultural Diversity. The ideas, texts,

histories, and cultures of civilizations other than our own. (Proficiency in a foreign language will also fulfill this requirement.)

3. Science and the Natural World. The sense of wonder and the process of discovery typical of great advances in the natural sciences.

4. Formal Reasoning and Quantitative Analysis. Logical, symbolic, statistical, linguistic, and mathematical reasoning, both in the abstract and as applied to other areas of inquiry.

The Curriculum Committee shall approve a list of no more than four Foundations Courses, limited in enrollment to 125 students, in each of the areas set forth above. In considering proposals for Foundations Courses, the Curriculum Committee should keep in mind that Foundations Courses are intended to offer introductions to major areas of intellectual inquiry and knowledge.

A course will be listed in the catalog as a Foundations course for no more than three consecutive years. This stipulation is provided in order to maintain the energy of the Foundations program, to allow as many faculty as possible to contribute to the program, and to protect individual departments from having to staff the program for protracted periods. A course that was previously designated as a Foundations course may be resubmitted to the Curriculum Committee for consideration of

Foundations status. However, in the process of reconsideration, the Curriculum Committee will evaluate the existing course along with the proposals it has received for new courses in the same Foundations area. In making its decisions on the renewal of Foundations status, the Curriculum Committee may evaluate classroom success through the examination of the teaching evaluations of the course under consideration.

With the exception of transfer students, all students must take all four Foundations Courses at Middlebury. There is one exception to the requirement that a student take a defined Foundations Course in each of the four areas. A student may satisfy the Language and Cultural Diversity requirement by course work in a foreign language at a level to be determined by the Division of Foreign Languages.

The Concentration Requirement

The Committee looks with favor on the purpose of the current Concentration requirement--that students take an integrated program of four courses, governed by a general principle, and in an area of study significantly different from the major. However, the Committee also believes that the workings of the Concentration requirement have become needlessly complex, and that there has been an unwarranted proliferation of concentrations in the catalog. The Committee also recognizes that there are certain instances when an interdivisional concentration is in reality too narrow, and other instances when an intradivisional concentration may in reality involve the study of two very different subjects.

Thus, the Committee makes the following proposals:

1. Each student be required to take a concentration consisting of four courses, governed by a general principle, and in an area of study significantly different from the major. The concentration shall be declared no later than the end of the sophomore year. A student may take either a standard departmental concentration or a self-designed concentration.

2. Responding to a list prepared by each department of those concentrations deemed appropriate for its majors, the Curriculum Committee will prepare a grid of all departments, listing those departmental combinations that are acceptable and unacceptable for purposes of the concentration requirement.

3. Each department shall offer no more than four standard concentrations.

4. A student may choose to complete a standard concentration in any department not ruled unacceptable by the grid.

5. A student may choose to complete a self-designed

concentration. If a self-designed concentration consists entirely of courses within a single department, and that department is not unacceptable for the student's major according to the grid, the student needs to receive the approval of only the chairman of the department in which the concentration courses will be taken. All other self-designed concentrations require the approval of the chairman of the department in which the preponderance of the concentration work is to be done, the student's major adviser, and the Curriculum Committee.

Major Requirements

The Committee recognizes that departmental major programs form the core of a student's last two years at Middlebury. Thus, much of a student's work in the junior and senior years is devoted to satisfying major requirements. However, there are some instances in which students devote too much of their last two years to work in one department. Thus, to ensure that all students have at least some distribution of courses during the junior and senior years, and to permit all students at least some choice of electives, the Committee makes the following proposals:

1. The number of courses which may be required for a departmental major is not less than 10, nor more than 14.

2. The number of courses which may be required for an inter-departmental major is not less than 12, nor more than 18.

3. No more than 16 courses taken in or assigned to a single department or discipline may be counted toward the 36 courses needed for graduation.

4. No more than 20 courses taken in or assigned to a single division of the College may be counted toward the 36 courses needed for graduation with the exception of first year foreign language sequences, which do not count against this limit.

Requirements for Senior Work

The Committee believes that all seniors will benefit from being required to complete a substantial piece of senior work before graduation. Many departments now have strong senior work requirements; it is the Committee's intention that all seniors have the opportunity to integrate their major study as the culminating intellectual experience of their College career. Just as the freshman seminars will provide a common academic environment for all members of the entering class, the senior work requirement will provide a common academic experience for all members of the graduating class.

The senior work requirement is as follows:

1. All departments shall establish a program of senior work, of one, two, or three courses.

2. The senior work requirement may consist of any or all of the following: senior seminars, senior essays or theses, senior projects, and comprehensive examinations.

A Tuesday Convocation

The Committee proposes that the hour before lunch on Tuesday each week be used for a College-wide lecture or other major cultural event for which there are no conflicting events. During the Winter Trimester this event would be integrated into the sophomore core course, as described under our curricular proposal, but all students and faculty would be encouraged to attend. In the Fall and Spring, lectures of general interest to the College community would be scheduled. Following this event, lunch at one of the dining units could be devoted to informal student-faculty discussion of the lecture or other event.

It is our impression that there are several problems with the public lectures delivered at the College. First, most are delivered late in the afternoon, at a time when most faculty and students are mentally exhausted, with many students having athletic commitments while faculty are often involved in committee work. Second, many lectures are highly specialized, and some are not appropriate for an undergraduate audience. This is not to suggest that all lectures need to be of an elementary nature. However, it is important that we seek outside speakers who are able to address issues accessible to interested students and to faculty from other disciplines.

A Tuesday morning lecture series would use funds from the Winter Term lecture budget to attract excellent speakers from a variety of disciplines to address issues of wide interest to faculty and students. Members of the College faculty would also be invited to participate in the series. Should the annual series of lectures be of sufficient interest and quality, they might be published as "The Middlebury Lectures."

Implementation of the Curriculum

Under the trimester calendar, the teaching load will be five courses a year in one of three configurations: 2-2-1, 2-1-2, or 1-2-2. In order to encourage participation in the freshman seminar program, faculty who teach at least three freshman seminars will thereby earn a single course reduction for professional development once every four years, which may be taken as a trimester of released time. Faculty who teach six courses a year for three years will likewise earn a single course reduction for professional development which may be taken as a trimester of released time in the fourth year. Combinations of these two types of curricular contributions will earn a similar leave. In the year in which faculty take a trimester leave, their teaching load will be 2-2-0, 2-0-2, or 0-2-2.

The teaching load for the four faculty participating in the sophomore core course will be 1-1-2, with the fall semester being used for preparation for the course while teaching one course for the department, and the second trimester devoted exclusively to the teaching of the core course.

The Curriculum Committee will be reconstituted as six senior faculty members appointed by the President. Each division will have at least one representative. The Committee will be chaired by the Dean of the Faculty.

The purpose of the Curriculum Committee will be to maintain the quality of the curriculum by upholding the curricular principles adopted by the faculty. The Curriculum Committee will be responsible for the administration of the freshman seminar program, the sophomore core course, and the new Foundations courses. Its duties will include the solicitation and evaluation of proposals for freshman seminars, core courses, and Foundations courses as well as reviewing those courses. It will also monitor teaching loads as they pertain to released time or course reductions. The Committee will meet with the Teaching Resources Committee on a regular basis and provide the latter with data on the teaching loads of the faculty. Student evaluations for all freshman seminars, the core course, and Foundations courses will be available to the Curriculum Committee. Given the highly confidential nature of its assignments, it will not be possible for students to serve on the Curriculum Committee. The Committee will not simply be administrative but will also work to support the concerns of the faculty through encouraging courses for faculty and faculty study groups.

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Although we have taken up the components of the curriculum individually, we have conceived them as a coordinated whole. An example of such coordination is the relationship between freshman seminars, the sophomore core course, and the new Foundation courses. The seminars provide opportunities for discussion in small classes, with considerable attention being paid to students' writing. The core course complements them with an educational experience common to everyone in a given year. The revised Foundations courses ensure that all students will encounter a broader range of modes of inquiry. The presence of each of these balancing components in the curriculum makes the others educationally responsible. Throughout our design, we have tried to emphasize balance rather than polarization. Specialized work in majors remains crucial to a student's time at the College, but is now better related to a more clearly articulated system of general education. Faculty research remains important and may become in some cases a base for mounting freshman seminars and Foundations courses alike. Research will, in fact, for many members of the faculty, become more possible during the academic year with a move to a standard teaching load of five courses a year, allowing most faculty a nine week term in which they teach only one class. Finally, though students will have to fulfill requirements in a greater number of categories, their options, in all cases but the core course, are numerous. This set of requirements helps students to shape their electives without restricting their real choices.

Appendix

Building a Community of Learning

The Committee's proposals focus on the College's curriculum as exemplified by course offerings and required courses. We recognize, however, that the goals of curricular change are connected with many other aspects of the College community, and we want in this Appendix to convey our broader perspectives on vital non-curricular dimensions of the Middlebury experience.

At the beginning of our deliberations, we heard comments not only from academicians but also from members of the College community associated with student life at Middlebury. Their views have significantly shaped our sense that the means of achieving the underlying goals of our proposed curricular reform go beyond the curriculum itself, and necessarily impinge on the broader life of the College community. Consequently we include here a number of recommendations that, while not matters for faculty vote, could, if implemented, complement and enhance the changes in courses and requirements that are the faculty's immediate concern. We hope our comments will stimulate discussion in the College community.

Our general sense is that the intellectual life at

Middlebury does not normally extend far beyond the classroom, at least for the dominating majority of our students. Our evidence for this sense is largely anecdotal, coming mainly from discussions we have had with our more intellectual students who have not felt entirely comfortable in the prevailing social and intellectual climate. We see two broad reasons for this situation, which suggest two different solutions to the problem. First is the image of the College as perceived by those outside Middlebury--especially by prospective students. We acknowledge that progress has been made on this front in the past decade, and that Middlebury's reputation as an intellectual institution has been enhanced. We also recognize that change in an externally perceived reputation comes only slowly. Nevertheless, our recommendations include several aimed at continuing and enlarging our efforts to attract more intellectually oriented students to Middlebury.

The second reason for the less-than-satisfactory intellectual life lies in what happens once students get to Middlebury. Our narrower curricular reforms are designed to give more commonality to the student's academic experience--a commonality that we hope will result in more intellectual expression beyond the classroom. But again, we are convinced that courses and requirements alone will not solve the problem. Our recommendations, therefore, include several that are intended to strengthen the link between the formal academic sector--exemplified largely by courses and faculty--and other aspects of College life. Included, too, are suggestions for facilitating more serious and coherent intellectual consideration of the many fine cultural opportunities--concerts, films, lectures, etc.--with which the College is privileged. Within the internal category, we also consider aspects of the residential College that might be changed to foster a greater emphasis on the intellectual life. Our specific recommendations follow.

Admissions

Statistics compiled by the Office of Admissions illustrate that Middlebury is competing for its students with the most selective and prestigious schools in the nation; Middlebury now attracts an extremely talented student body. In order to compete with increasing effectiveness with the leading schools, however, we offer the following recommendations:

- We recommend the continuing development of closer ties between the faculty and the Admissions Office. In particular, we are encouraged by recent efforts in this direction taken at the initiative of the Office of Admissions, applaud the administration's enthusiastic support for these efforts, and urge that they be continued. Some specific areas where the faculty can participate meaningfully in admissions include:

  * Recruiting through the recent program of faculty speakers' bureau, for example, that has made presentations to high school groups throughout the country. These presentations expose prospective students to the kind of statements about Middlebury that we feel should be made frequently and forcefully.

  * Development of special programs to attract students with strengths in particular areas. An example is the highly successful New England Young Writers' Conference for secondary school students held last spring.

  * Faculty assistance in screening applications.

  * Admissions tours provide an ideal opportunity to represent Middlebury's intellectual life in the best possible light. We urge greater faculty involvement in the training and orientation of student guides.

- We also recommend that the Admissions Office and the Dean of the College continue collecting comparative data that can give us a sense of the perception of Middlebury College by our potential applicants; such data could prove valuable in shaping new programs and policies.

- A long-term goal of our admissions policy should be the diversification of the student body. In particular, we believe that the Admissions Office should actively seek students who demonstrate excellence and commitment to activity in particular areas, and should give those students priority over others with good academic records but no single outstanding interest or commitment. Other goals should include diversifying the economic, social, and ethnic background of our student body, and increasing the proportion of students from public school backgrounds. This kind of active recruiting for special talents is already done well and aggressively by the athletic department; we see no reason why similar recruiting should not occur on all fronts where particular student talents might invigorate life at Middlebury. We believe that relatively small changes in the makeup of the student body could have dramatic effects on the intellectual climate at Middlebury. A small proportion of older students, for example, might catalyze positive changes that would be more difficult to achieve with our present student population.

All of this relates to our financial aid program. Despite our aid-blind admissions policy, comparisons of applicants' perceptions of Middlebury with the ten colleges with which we share the highest percentage of acceptances indicate that Middlebury is perceived as ranking behind all ten in its financial aid program. This image is incorrect and is undoubtedly driving potential applicants away. It is significant to note, however, that for the past three years, there have been substantial funds left unexpended in the financial aid budget, and the percentage of students on financial aid for 1985-86 has dropped below last year's level. All of this suggests that the College must renew its efforts to communicate to potential applicants our willingness to provide substantial financial aid to students who do not come from affluent backgrounds.

The image of the College will change only slowly, and efforts to improve appearances will be impossible unless the realities on campus also change. The Committee thus recommends certain changes in undergraduate life through which we may better build and foster an intellectual community.

Undergraduate Life

- We recommend that serious consideration be given to the elimination of freshman dormitories, and that schedules for dormitory construction and renovation take this possibility into consideration. We have heard strong arguments on both sides of this issue, but feel that, in the long run, the development of a mature intellectual community is probably helped by the elimination of freshman dormitories. At the same time, we recognize that the freshman year is in many respects significantly different from the other years, and suggest that special attention continue to be given to freshmen. For example, freshmen should continue to be assigned to freshman roommates, and groups of freshman in a particular residence hall should share common student and faculty advisors. Our curricular proposals--specifically the freshman seminars and sophomore core course--address ways in which the academic program can further enrich these first two years while building a sense of class unity that is based more on academic and intellectual experience than on dormitory living.

- We recommend that serious consideration be given to the place of fraternities at Middlebury College, especially in light of the decisions made at such institutions as Williams, Colby, and Amherst.

- We urge the Dean of Students' Office to continue in its efforts to select and train the best Junior Counselors for freshmen, whether in freshman dormitories or in newly integrated dormitories. Our concern is that an intellectually serious and socially mature tone be established early in a student's career.

- We recommend that the freshman advising system be strengthened. Too often freshmen have virtually no contact with their advisors after their initial meetings. Our proposal for freshman seminars whose leaders are also the faculty advisors for their seminar students will, we believe, significantly improve the advising system by ensuring that advisors have contact with their advisees at least twice a week. It will also reduce the number of faculty and staff needed as freshmen advisors by approximately 60%. Since advisors will now have responsibility for two to three times the current number of students, we recommend that a stipend be provided each freshman advisor.

- Although our recent experiment with faculty in the dormitories has now ended, we recommend that the College continue to explore the possibility of faculty presence in the dormitories, perhaps as a long-range goal in the context of our dormitory construction and renovation program.

Building an Intellectual Community

- We recommend that the dining units be open to faculty at student invitation for all meals, or at the very least at all lunches. The potential of the student-faculty lunch program is great, but is rarely realized because of scheduling difficulties or lack of knowledge of the program. Were it a daily possibility, its effect on the intellectual climate might be significantly enhanced.
- We urge departments to consider holding conferences and symposia such as the annual Economics Conference, the Symposium on the Christ and the Bodhisattva, and the East-West Conference. Such events, besides bringing national attention to the College, are among the most

effective means of fostering an intellectual community that transcends strictly departmental bounds.